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JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

MEMORANDUM

To: Members
Joint Committee on Finance

From: Senator Mark Miller
Representative Mark Pocan

Date: January 22, 2010

Re: State of Wisconsin Government Accountability Board Report on the
Wisconsin Statewide Voter Registration System

Attached is a report on Wisconsin statewide voter registration system from the Government Accountability Board.

This report is being provided for your information only. No action by the Committee is required. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Attachments

MM:MP:jm

State of Wisconsin\Government Accountability Board

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JUDGE WILLIAM EICH
Chair

KEVIN J. KENNEDY
Director and General Counsel

January 22, 2010

The Honorable Mark Miller, Senate Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Finance
Room 409 South, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53703

RECEIVED
JAN 22 2010
BY: *St. Finance*

The Honorable Mark Pocan, Assembly Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Finance
Room 309 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Senator Miller and Representative Pocan:

I am pleased to provide you and your committee members with an update on the Wisconsin Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) for the months of October, November and December 2009.

The reporting requirement for the Election Administration Fund that supports the SVRS sunset on June 30, 2009, in accordance with 2007 Wisconsin Act 20, Section 9227(IL). Although this mandate is expired, we committed to continuing to report quarterly on the progress of the SVRS in order to keep the JCF informed and involved.

SVRS continues to serve our local election partners effectively by being a valuable tool in the management and administration of elections in Wisconsin. Equally important is the fact that our 1,922 county and municipal clerk customers and their staffs are noticing the continuing improvements we are steadily making to the System. This attached report brings you up-to-date since our last quarterly summary regarding the status of SVRS core activities and noteworthy achievements.

Please let us know if we can provide additional information. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin J. Kennedy".

Kevin J. Kennedy
Director and General Counsel
Government Accountability Board

cc: Co-Chairs, Joint Legislative Committee on Audit
Senator Spencer Coggs
Secretary Michael Morgan, Department of Administration
Robert Lang, Legislative Fiscal Bureau
Vickie Holten, Legislative Fiscal Bureau
Cynthia Dombrowski, State Budget Office Analyst
Nathaniel E. Robinson, Elections Division Administrator
Barbara A. Hansen, SVRS Director

Wisconsin Government Accountability Board

Statewide Voter Registration System Quarterly Summary

October 1, 2009 through December 31, 2009

The following activities occurred regarding the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) during this quarterly reporting period:

Quarterly Fiscal Summary

Expenditures for SVRS for October, November and December 2009 totaled \$470,846.41 which included:

- A. Staffing costs;
- B. Payments Made to Outside Contractors; and,
- C. Supplies and Services Costs.

Included in the second quarter expenditures is the cost of approximately \$26,400 for temporary workers used to respond to voters of the additional 15,000 HAVA Check letters for a second wave of mailings and the data entry for this initiative.

Expenditures for SVRS for October, November and December 2009 totaled \$470,846.41 which included salaries, supplies and services. In comparison, expenditures for the same period in 2008 totaled \$491,490.91.

SVRS Core Activities

1. Software Upgrade(s)

Several software patches and an updated version of the application code (version 6.7) were applied in SVRS. The patches and new code improved voter death, felon and duplicate matching reliability. The code upgrades will improve voter data quality for the clerks as the 2010 election cycle begins.

2. Data Interface

Clerks continue to use SVRS to run HAVA Checks to validate against Department of Transportation (DOT) and Social Security Administration (SSA) records, and to confirm matches with Department of Corrections (DOC) for felon information, and Department of Health Services (DHS) for death data, as part of on-going HAVA compliance.

Clerks process HAVA Checks and confirm matches on an ongoing basis during the course of their daily election administration tasks, having done so since the Interfaces became functional in SVRS on August 6, 2008. During the months of October, November and December 2009, clerks processed approximately 10,296 new HAVA Checks with DOT/SSA in SVRS. (Retroactive HAVA Check information is not included in these totals. Please see the section regarding Retroactive HAVA Checks for more information on that initiative.)

3. Election Readiness

As the 2010 Election Cycle approaches, staff is providing training and technical assistance to county and municipal clerks for their election readiness. For example:

- SVRS Checklists I for the 2010 Spring Election was distributed to clerks.
- SVRS trainers are conducting classes in SVRS for beginners, advanced users and those who are looking for a refresher course in preparation for the upcoming 2010 election cycle.

4. Data Requests

The Board regularly receives requests from customers interested in purchasing electronic voter lists. The SVRS allows us to generate electronic voter lists statewide, for any county or municipality in the state, or by any election district, from congressional districts to school districts. The voter lists also include all elections that a voter has participated in, going back to 2006 when the system was deployed.

While there were no statewide elections during this quarter, Board staff received many inquiries from customers interested in purchasing data from the SVRS system. The volume of requests for SVRS data will continue to increase as we approach the Spring 2010 elections and interest is beginning for the Fall 2010 elections as candidates start to gear up for their contests. The following statistics demonstrate the activity in this area during this reporting period:

- Sixty-nine (69) inquiries were received requesting information on purchasing electronic voter lists from the SVRS system. This is compared to 31 for the last reporting period.
- 37 electronic voter lists were purchased.
- \$16,710 was received for electronic voter lists from the 37 requests.

Noteworthy SVRS Initiatives

1. Status: Retroactive HAVA Checks

During the last week of November and the first week of December 2009, staff sent the remaining letters to approximately 15,000 voters who had a Retroactive HAVA Check result in a non-match. Limited Term Employees (LTEs) were hired to assist with our response protocol (answer calls, return voicemails, data enter results, etc.).

- Of the 777,561 checks run in June, approximately 120,000, or 16% initially resulted in a non-match. As of January 20, 2010, 78,192, or 10% still show a non-match, which is a significant improvement.

- 87,000 letters were sent in July to voters who showed a non-match. A second batch of 15,000 letters to the remaining non-matches was sent in late November and early December. The remaining 18,000 voter records were updated by the local clerks.
- Updated information for approximately 25,000 voters who responded to the Board's letter has been collected from the first batch distributed in July. These voters' records have been corrected and have had their HAVA Check rerun, helping contribute to the decrease in non-matches.
- The Board has received approximately 7,100 responses so far from the Second Wave of letters sent last in late November/early December. This represents a 48% return rate. Voters were asked to respond using an included postage pre-paid envelope by January 4, 2010, however it is anticipated that responses will continue to come in after that date.

2. Status: Efforts to Improve the Statewide Voter Registration System's Performance

As previously reported, an Ad-Hoc SVRS Study Team was formed to evaluate the SVRS and plan for the future of the application.

In order to continue to address the needs of SVRS users, during the past quarter, DET Applications Development staff brainstormed with the Board's developers to prepare recommendations on upgrade and enhancement to core SVRS functionality including timelines and cost estimates. Currently, Board management is considering a proposal presented by Department of Administration/Division of Enterprise Technology (DET) Administrator Oskar Anderson and his team in early December 2009. The proposal includes the concept of DET providing comprehensive IS support services for the Board's entire computer program needs. The Board's Director and General Counsel and management are reviewing the DET proposal.

The Board has also continued to receive feedback from local election clerks regarding the SVRS. SVRS' performance continues to be a concern; however, feedback we receive on the new and/or improved functionalities continues to be positive. Addressing SVRS' performance is a 2010 priority. During this reporting period, SVRS was used throughout the state for school board and other local special elections.

3. Online Voter Registration Initiative

The Online Voter Registration Team continues in the data gathering phase of the project. The Team is charged with researching other states' online registration best practices, and advising on how online voter registration may become a reality in Wisconsin. Board staff met with interested and concerned members of the public in December. Further meetings with the Department of Transportation to discuss the real-time HAVA verification process are anticipated. The team will prepare a report on the examination of implementing online registration in Wisconsin.

4. Improving the Canvass Process

The Team to improve the canvas process and retire the Board's current election administration software, SWEBIS II, is continuing on schedule. Enhancements and tweaks to SVRS have been identified and, under an agreement with DET, work is well underway with a pre-test of the new online system possible during the February 2010 Primary, or by the April 2010 Spring Election. The SVRS includes much of this functionality already, and will require some enhancements in order to fully handle this process.

5. Voter/Felon Comparison

In accordance with State statutes, the Board is performing an audit that compares voter participation records in SVRS against convicted felon records at Department of Corrections. This audit is used to detect if felons improperly voted in the election.

During this reporting period, clerks responded after review of the list sent to them in September regarding voting in the November 4, 2008 Presidential and General Election. On November 17, 2009, 124 individuals were referred to the appropriate 37 District Attorneys. 20 District Attorneys have reported to the Board on the status of the referrals. District Attorneys are required by law to give status reports within 40 days and every 30 days thereafter until the case is closed.

Based on feedback from the District Attorneys requesting additional information, we are reviewing our protocols in order to add more information at the time of referral.

Also during this quarter, the comparison of voters in the 2009 February Primary and April Spring Election was begun. This process includes several steps:

- Step 1 - Compare felons against voter participation recorded in the SVRS. This step is complete with 3 names identified for February primary and 16 names for the April election.
- Step 2 - Send potential matches that resulted from Step 1 to the Department of Corrections (DOC) to have them confirm that the person was in fact ineligible on the date of the election. This step is complete with 3 names remaining for the February primary and 12 names for the April election.
- Step 3 - Send the potential matches left after Step 2 to municipal clerks for them to verify if the voter and the felon are the same person and/or if the person indeed voted in the election in question. This step is in process. The names have been sent to 15 clerks, who are reviewing the names and providing updates to G.A.B.
- Step 4 - Send any potential matches that remain after Step 3 to District Attorneys for investigation. This step will be completed when all of the updates from clerks have been received and compiled during the next quarter.